

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 01017 121559Z

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1674

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, LY, TS

SUBJECT: RAOUF M'HENNI DISAPPEARANCE: DEMONSTRATION AT
LIBYAN EMBASSY IN TUNIS

REF: TUNIS 0957, TUNIS 0829

1. FEBRUARY 12 PRESS REPORTED THAT 2000 WORKERS OF ALI M'HENNI ENTERPRISES DEMONSTRATED PEACEFULLY IN FRONT OF LIBYAN EMBASSY IN TUNIS PREVIOUS DAY AND PRESENTED PETITION TO LARG HIGH REPRESENTATIVE ABDELHAMID ZENTANI ASKING THAT ALL EFFORTS BE MADE TO FIND RAOUF M'HENNI. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNT, THE DEMONSTRATORS REPRESENTED THE 8000 EMPLOYEES OF VARIOUS M'HENNI COMPANIES IN TUNISIA. TWO PERSONS MET WITH ZENTANI TO GIVE HIM THE PETITION, TALKED WITH HIM FOR OVER AN HOUR, AND AGREED TO RETURN FEBRUARY 14 FOR A REPORT. THE PETITION GAVE JANUARY 16 AS THE DATE FOR M'HENNI'S DISAPPEARANCE, THE FIRST TIME THAT A SPECIFIC DATE WAS PUBLICALLY REPORTED. IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEMONSTRATION, SEVERAL TRADE UNION, SPORTS, AND BUSINESS GROUPS IN SOUSSE SENT TELEGRAMS TO QADHAFI ON THE M'HENNI DISAPPEARANCE.

2. AFTER THE MEETING WITH ZENTANI, RAOUF M'HENNI'S BROTHER MOURAD TOLD PRESS THAT HE HAD COMPLETELY DISCOUNTED HYPOTHESIS THAT KIDNAPPING HAD BEEN POLITICALLY

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PAGE 02 TUNIS 01017 121559Z

INSPIRED. HE ALSO NOTED IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION OF

M'HENNI ENTERPRISES TO LIBYAN DEVELOPMENT.

3. TEXT OF MOTION LISTED M'HENNI COMPANIES REPRESENTED IN THE DEMON, ALL OF THEM IN TUNISIA. IT CALLED ON LIBYAN GOVERNMENT TO MAKE ALL EFFORTS TO FIND M'HENNI SINCE HE HAS BEEN CARRYING OUT PROJECTS IN LIBYA ENTRUSTED TO HIM BY LARG AND UNDER ITS PROTECTION. PETITION EXPRESSES CONFIDENCE THAT EFFORTS WILL BE CROWNED BY SUCCESS, DESCRIBES THE AGONY RAOUF'S DISAPPEARANCE HAS CAUSED THE FAMILY, AND EXPRESSES CONVICTION THAT ZENTANI WILL TRANSMIT PETITION TO HIS "CLAIRVOYANT" GOVERNMENT.

4. COMMENT:IT IS NOT OFTEN THAT DEMONSTRATIONS OCCUR IN TUNIS AND THIS ONE CLEARLY HAD GOT APPROVAL. THE M'HENNI FAMILY'S PUBLIC DISCOUNTING OF A POLITICAL MOTIVE MAY BE INTENDED TO EASE PRESSUREON LARG AND MORE EFFECTIVELY SPEED RAOUF'S RELEASE.
SEELYE

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